

LIFE IN THE ORPHAN HOMES

When George Müller started the Children's Homes his primary objective was not the welfare of the children. His main concern was that it should be seen that God was providing all the needs as a result of prayer and faith, without anyone being asked or approached.

From the time George Müller started the first home in Wilson Street in 1836 with its 30 girls until the completion of the fifth Home at Ashley Down, bringing his total family to more than 2,000 he was faced with all manner of social problems. Disease was the greatest hazard, ranging from outbreaks of cholera to smallpox epidemics. Poor sanitary conditions, open sewers, unclean drinking water, rubbish piled in the street, no provision for removing the dead and no preventative measures against disease, caused a death rate of high proportions. Despite all this and a slow acting Government, George Müller managed through prayer and faith, to protect his 'large family' against such filth and degradation. Indeed the Müller orphans were more fortunate than most.

Although there were some children who did not enjoy life in the Homes, for many of them it became the means of their salvation. The alternative was little food, often no home and the meaning of life became a matter of survival. The future held little or no hope. George Müller provided, through God, hope, love and a family life with a sound Christian foundation.

All the children in the Homes were smartly dressed. The boys were given three suits and those nine years and above wore a smart navy-blue Eton Jacket, waistcoat and corduroy trousers together with a glazed peaked cap. The younger boys wore a blue shirt instead of the jacket and short cloaks were provided for bad weather conditions. The girls wore a navy blue cotton dress which was protected by a cloak, shawl or tippet according to the weather. All girls wore a straw coloured bonnet tied with an attractive band. The girls also had varying hairstyles according to age. For example, the older girls who were capable of doing their own hair were allowed to grow it to shoulder length or longer.

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